

Seattle Light Rail Review Panel

Meeting Notes for April 3, 2002

Agenda Items

- McClellan TPSS Update
- MLK Undergrounding Update
- North Link Conceptual Engineering

Commissioners Present

Tom Bykonen
Carolyn Law
Don Royse
Paul Tomita

Staff Present

Debora Ashland, Sound Transit
Marty Curry, Planning Commission
John Rahaim, Design Commission
Cheryl Sizov, CityDesign
Kathy A Dockins, CityDesign

LRRP Business

Approval of March 20th meeting notes was deferred until more Commissioners who attended that meeting can be present to review the draft. Cheryl introduced the newest member of the Panel, Tom Bykonen, who represents the Design Commission and fills the position recently vacated by Rick Sundberg.

Paul Tomita chaired the meeting as an interim measure, while Cheryl discussed the need for the group to select a new Chair. It was decided that Cheryl would query members by phone about their interest in serving as Chair or nominating someone else.

Cheryl also updated the Panel on the letter to City Council from LRRP regarding undergrounding utilities along the MLK Corridor. She said she was waiting to hear what City Council says at its briefing on the matter before finalizing the letter, but that it would be completed for signature no later than the Friday before the Council discussion on Monday.

Lastly, Cheryl stated that there will only be a LRRP meeting on April 17th if today's discussion regarding North Link needs more time; otherwise no meeting until May 1st.

McClellan Transit Power Substation (TPSS) Update

John Walser, Sound Transit

John recapped the location and features of the McClellan station before focusing on the TPSS update. The TPSS is a pre-fabricated structure approximately 55' long x 12'-14' wide x 10'-11' tall. The plan was to incorporate the TPSS and other systems structures, but ST has since discovered that the pre-fabricated module cannot be installed during construction of the station. The reason for using a pre-fab unit is that it typically requires less on-site work, but apparently not in this instance. ST is now proposing to locate the TPSS near to portal on the vacated DSHS site instead, where it can fit right into the old DSHS foundation with a retaining wall on two sides. This can be done while still leaving room for the U.W. Laundry to redevelop. Although this was originally slated to be landscaped, ST has been receiving numerous inquiries about redevelopment of the site. If future development occurs, some of the landscaping in that area would be sacrificed.

ST is also proposing to move the Signals structure from the station to closer to the crossover track in the 730 contract segment. These changes in location of the systems structures has opened up an interesting discussion of the "station as building" theme, and how indeed the spaces under the platform should be used. They now may be able to open up the area under the platform, which in turn, affects how we view the station itself.

ST is trying to leave as much hillside by the portal undisturbed as possible and restore the greenbelt. They are contemplating a woodland understory as opposed to a park-like setting. ST wants to create natural barriers to access to the portal.

Discussion

- Will you put fencing around the TPSS? (Not sure yet; it may not be necessary.)
- Do you really need all that space between the TPSS and transition structure? *(We need enough room to get a truck in there to change transformers, along with monthly service visits.)*
- I see this as a positive development; getting the TPSS out of the station area. It seems like this gives us more flexibility at that station itself. *(And we won't necessarily have to lose the sense of the station as a building, either.)*
- How much space is freed up at the station? Enough for a coffee shop, other retail? *(There is space for a kiosk, vending cart, or maybe infill retail space. But is there a market for this? This part of the city depends on drive-up patronage. There may be other more desirable places to develop first.)*
- Where is the controlled access part of the station? Is the entire area at ground level a fare-free zone? *(There will be a security grill at both ends. We have a concern with no "eyes" on that area—this could be a convenient place to hide. We are also talking about architectural grillwork for visibility without access. And we might leave some of the space for long term storage.)*
- Do we have an action to propose?
- I think we're clear about supporting the move of the TPSS from the station to the portal area, but less clear on what should occur in the old station location. *(ST will come back to you in mid June with 60% station design, which will give you an opportunity to comment the vacated station area then. We are also talking to the Police about CPTED principles, and how they apply to this area.)*
- I urge you to visually open up the area under the platform, but can't recommend more without seeing the design. Minimize the yard footprint. I am concerned about the chainlink fence, blank concrete, and barbed wire! Put more design attention on how the portal works. From these drawings, it looks like it has potential to be a very harsh place.
- Yes, it looks like one big wall. But it does have the benefit of hiding the TPSS. Nonetheless, the design needs attention. Regarding the under platform area, don't open up view of the area if it only going to be storage.
- The future TOD potential is there. Leave the area open to design for a future flow-through of people.
- This will ultimately end up helping with perceived safety.

Action

The Panel concluded discussion with an action to recommend approval of the new location for the TPSS structure at the tunnel portal versus the station area itself. The Panel advised Sound Transit to pay particular attention to eliminating, or at least attenuating, the harshness of the materials in the TPSS area; namely the chain link fence, concrete, and barbed wire. The Panel requests further review of the station area—and design changes due to the TPSS relocation—at 60% completion.

MLK Undergrounding Update

Jon Layzer, SPO

Jon Layzer updated the Panel on the Mayor's proposal to fund undergrounding the utilities along the MLK Corridor. He described the Mayor's Resolution and noted how LRRP could support it. He added that the City wouldn't actually make any payments until 2005, and thus wouldn't need to identify a fund source right now. The Mayor coordinated with Sound Transit in drafting the proposal, with the goal of drafting a resolution they could endorse—we came close but still have a \$10 million gap. Especially in view of City Light's recent fiscal situation, this is a substantial commitment for the City to make. Panel members asserted that they have always been in favor of undergrounding utilities, and intend to have a letter stating so sent to City Council.

North Link Conceptual Engineering

Ron Endlich, Sound Transit

Allen Parker, Sound Transit

The briefing began with an overview of the various routes under discussion for North Link, including South Lake Union and Capitol Hill options as well as University District to Northgate options. Highlights of the presentation are recapped as follows:

- Routes include variations on whether Convention Place Station is included as a light rail station or not
- Routes include both deep and shallow tunnel options
- An Eastlake route would include just one stop, at Harrison Street, before reaching the U District; this would be an 80' deep cut and cover station with a vent shaft just to the north. About 50% of riders would be from Capitol Hill. Getting over I-5 is the biggest challenge—could include a pedestrian bridge 100' in the air with a 500' span.
- First Hill route—same as before
- Capitol Hill route—both Broadway and Nagle versions; the Nagle version still with a crossover that intrudes slightly into the Lincoln Park reservoir.
- U District route—in addition to the original Locally Preferred Alternative (LPA), ST is including options that are much shallower with escalator access. There could be 1 or 2 stations.

Discussion

- Is a station at CPS possible in all route alternatives? (All except the original LPA.)
- Did you consider a station between Harrison and the U District? *(No. The topography is too difficult, and there isn't good ridership there. This means it would be costly, and the whole point of the North Link SEIS is to consider less expensive alternatives to the LPA.)*
- Since Eastlake hugs I-5, did you consider any aerial alignments? *(Yes but they have very tight physical constraints, plus the risk of I-5 piers slipping down the hillside during construction. Ridership trade-offs are still an issue with all route options. We'll be getting community feedback tomorrow evening.)*

Ron Endlich went on to say that Sound Transit intends to have the architectural team on board by June, and publish the SEIS in the fall, so the Board can select a route by December 2002 or January 2003.

- So there is a 6000/per day ridership difference between 1 and 2 stations on Capitol Hill?
- What is the loss of ridership without the First Hill station? *(About 5000 to 10,000 fewer people, and even fewer riders if the alignment travels along Eastlake.)*
- Is there an option for a spur line to First Hill at some later date? *(Not likely as a stand-alone. It is technically feasible, but not a cost saver.)*

- What is the most cost-effective route? (*Direct from CPS—without a station—to Capitol Hill, then to Montlake.*)

The Panel reiterated its strong support for a station at Convention Place, and concluded the discussion by noting that they would like another briefing in late summer. No action was taken.

The meeting adjourned at 6:00 pm.